

# MØSEFUND

M A N G A L I T S A



*By Wilhelm W. Kohl*

Pictures - Mangalitsa by Møsefund

## A MAN'S PURSUIT OF THE PERFECT PIG

*How* many pig farmers do you know that have a corner office on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, a few blocks away from Central Park? Or when you are invited to his country home, a remodeled way station of the old Pony Express in northern New Jersey, have their personal chef serve dinner?



But make no mistake, Chris Andersen is not only a legendary figure on Wall Street, but extremely serious about his Mangalitsas. He may not be wearing Carhartts most of the time, but he certainly is in the pig business, having accumulated around 4,500 head of them. They of course are not all at Mosefund Farm, the property Andersen acquired years ago when his children were young, but it is this property that is the heart and soul of the operation.







*I* had the pleasure of meeting Chris the first time in June of 2011, get a tour of his farm, and listen to the many stories about his pigs while enjoying a fabulous dinner, prepared of course by his personal chef, Michael Clampffer, a 10 year veteran of his “Mangalitsa by Mosefund” operation.

The Mangalitsa pig is unique in many ways, including the lengthy time between weaning and reaching market weight, making it expensive and capital intensive to raise. Quality has its price, it forced Putnam out of business, and by early 2010 he had sold his entire remaining breeding herd to Andersen.

*A*nother unique aspect of the pig is that it requires a very specific type of butchery, known as “seam butchery”, one that is not generally practiced in the United States. Mangalitsas also are “wooly pigs”, meaning that in order to keep the skin on, they need to be scalded and scraped, but very few processors actually have scalding tubs. It takes a large pork processor less than 2 minutes to cut up a standard pig with a standard band saw. Seam butchery requires a much more delicate touch, carefully cutting it muscle by muscle, carefully also preserving the up to 4 inches of back fat, raw material for the very popular “Lardo”, now part of many charcuterie plates.



*Lardo by Mosefund*



*I*t took some Austrian assistance with butchering courses at Mosefund, Andersen fondly likes to remember as “Pig University”, to truly get seam cutting taught and established. Isabell and Christoph Wiesner travelled to the U.S. repeatedly, not only teaching at Mosefund, but also at PigstockTC, an annual event in Traverse City, Michigan, where over 100 chefs from all over the USA have been trained in that skill.

Despite great initial and continued enthusiasm for the “Kobe Pork”, and Andersen indeed finding a slaughter house to properly process his Mangalitsas, other problems had to be overcome. He quickly learned that you can sell one of the best parts of the animal, the flavorful neck meat, at \$ 18.00 as a “collar steak”, but not as a “neck steak” at \$ 8.00. There is a lot of marketing in just one word. He also developed a bacon burger, a true humdinger of a burger as he likes to call it. That burger is now one of the most popular items on his product list, offered in a multitude of restaurants from coast to coast, and recently of Gordon Ramsey fame. It is Gordon Ramsey’s famous BurGR in Las Vegas, where it was voted the best burger in the city.





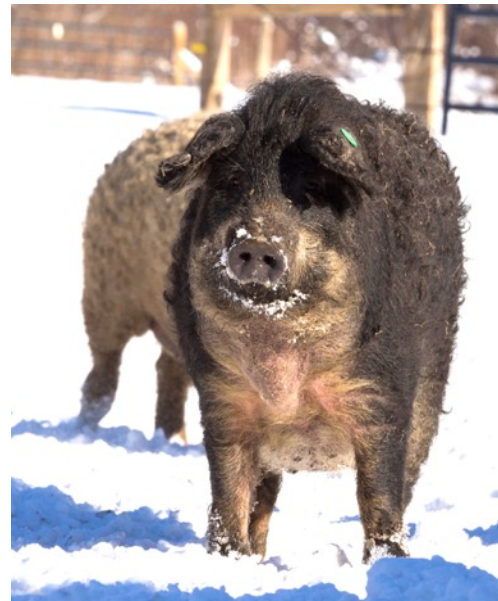


When you visit Mosefund farms, you will quickly realize that Andersen not only has a beautiful farm, but is very much concerned about the overall welfare of his animals. He fully understands that natural behavior, including exercise, is necessary for the physical development of pigs, and that rooting is part of their routine.

“So, no (nose) rings for my pigs” he says, but a 20 acre fenced mountain side for them to climb and play, with water on one side, and the feeders on the other. But he is careful to rotate the pigs from pasture to pasture, as he does not want to lose top soil, and he also has a special feed. Not the standard 15-16% protein soybean meal mixture conventional farms use, but one based mostly on barley, that helps produce the firm, snow white back fat that makes the Mangalitsa pork so desirable.

In building Mangalitsa by Mosefund into the industry leader it is, one problem encountered was not the usual kind. It is not unusual for a boar to break a fence, or jump over one to get to a sow, but to have one uncastrated male in with 40+ young gilts in their first heat cycle, that is a real problem. Receiving a phone call from a panicked farm hand while on vacation in Morocco, Andersen found out that these sows had started to drop litters all over the mountain side...and he ended up with a piglet in his own shower for a few days.

Sharing a shower with a piglet can be a problem of course, but in comparison to some of the other problems involved in owning and raising pigs, not all that overwhelming.



*Swallow Belly Mangalitsa*







*P*ig farms are looked at as smelly propositions – with a lot of justification in most cases, and generally located in less densely populated areas than northern New Jersey. (Andersen has 3 contract farms located in Iowa raising a lot of Mangalitsas for him for that exact reason) Plenty of his neighbors are in the farming business themselves, but a few complainers had to be persuaded of his good intentions with some of his bacon and sausages, personally delivered. For one individual that was not enough, and after filing endless complaints with the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, he finally was quieted with a cease and desist order from that department. The farm had passed ever single inspection with flying colors.





*A*ndersen has big plans, and his timing is quite perfect. He has launched a line of charcuterie products, with the first of his dry cured Mangalitsa hams finally reaching maturity at the writing of this article. There are a variety of additional products, from salamis, Culatello and Amarena Cherry Sausage to Lardo, his favorite. His overall strategy is “to make his Mangalitsas into the bespoke pigs”, maybe even knocking the Spaniards of their pedestal.

He recently has hired a new Chief Executive Officer for his company, Guido Campellone, a meat marketing expert, who is perfectly aware that the American diet is changing. A firm believer not only in the superior quality of the Mangalitsa pork, but in the health qualities of the Mangalitsa fat, he is already in the forefront of returning lard into the favorite fat of the American diet. Whipped lardo is not a household favorite at the moment, but who knows what can happen in a few more years.





The Mangalitsa pig in recent years has become the poster pig for a changing pork industry, popularizing the traditional way of raising them on pasture and free range. Andersen's ambitious program is based on the premise that his pigs should enjoy life, and then in turn return traditional, true pork flavor to the dinner plate. Looks to me like his Mangalitsa by Mosefund program is well on its way to supplying a lot of eager customers.



*Text by Wilhelm W. Kohl*

PICTURES MANGALITSA BY MØSEFUND